

Successful Cornering

Cornering on a motorcycle is much different than what takes place if you are a driver in a car. Cornering for motorcyclists requires a skillful handling of the situation, or simply stated, a little more finesse.

If you have ever been involved in a motorcycle training exercise, then you have heard the terms: “slow, look, press, and roll.” The implementation of these terms is essential to good cornering. *Slow* before the turn, so that you are not braking into the turn. *Look* through the turn, so that you know where you are going and where you want the motorcycle to end up. *Press* the handgrip by pushing into the turn, or press left to go left, which causes the motorcycle to lean in the direction of the turn and therefore begins to turn in that direction. *Roll* the throttle on so that you have power to the rear wheel, enough power to maintain present speed or slightly increasing speed.

I see too many riders braking all the way into or through a turn because they came into the turn too fast. The motorcycle suspension is designed to go around corners with power to the rear wheel, driving it forward. When the rider comes off of the throttle in a turn, the suspension is “relieved” and gets loose and wiggly. That is unsettling to the rider, and I suppose some riders think that is normal. On the other hand, when a rider hits the corner at the right speed and is able to use power all the way around, the bike “sets” and feels like it is going around on a rail, giving the rider a feeling of confidence.

A while back I was riding with a group at Deals Gap. The bike in front of me during our first run was a brand new Gold Wing 1800 with a fairly new rider and co-rider aboard. He and his wife were excited and having a good time. However, I noticed that as he approached most of the turns, he was braking into the turn, sometimes as much as a third or even half way around the turn. Then he would be off the brakes and back onto the throttle. The transition did not look smooth, and he was not moving as fast as the riders in front of him.

After a brake and over a soft drink, I engaged him in conversation about proper braking. I emphasized braking *before* the turn, getting off the brakes before the turn started, and using power to the rear wheel all the way around each and every turn.

The transformation was dramatic. During the next run he was perfect, and moving much faster. He was keeping up with the riders in front of him and moving through the turns much smoother.

The next time we stopped, his wife came to me and stated: “That was so much smoother and much more comfortable. I was relaxed and able to take pictures through the whole trip.” (She got some really good ones too.) Her husband then walked up and explained to me that he was also more comfortable during that run and it made the ride so much more fun. He stated that the bike felt more stable and did not “wobble” around in the middle of the turn, making him uneasy.

Remember folks. If you get into a turn too fast and are braking, you are using additional traction. You only have so much traction available and a lot of it is being used to keep the tires from breaking loose in the turn. Braking could cause you to use up more traction than you have available, resulting in a slide out. So slow *before* the turn.

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